

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

# LAUREN'S FOUNDATION

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Transforming Lives • Empowering Community





Lauren Fitzgerald

# LAUREN'S FOUNDATION

Lauren's Foundation was created by the family of Lauren Fitzgerald, a life-long Berks County, PA resident who died in 2005 from complications related to a brain tumor at the age of 20. The Foundation honors Lauren's memory by supporting local families through a variety of charitable funds that support high school seniors, families with seriously ill children, brain tumor research and organ donation awareness programs.

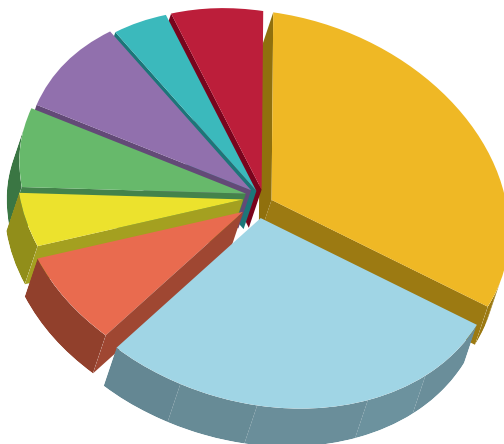
A quote from American poet Maya Angelou, adopted by Lauren following her diagnosis, serves as a guiding principle for much of the Foundation's work. That quote reads "I can be changed by what happens to me. I refuse to be reduced by it." The Foundation recognizes, supports and celebrates individuals and families that persevere despite significant, adverse life circumstances. Lauren's Foundation is an IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit and is registered with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Charities.

## OUR MISSION

1. Support families that are caring for loved ones afflicted with a brain tumor or other serious illness by providing financial assistance with living expenses.
2. Provide scholarships and recognition for students that have faced adverse life circumstances, yet persevered in the face of their adversity to excel academically and personally.
3. Support recreational and educational programs that serve families, children and adults in the local community.
4. Promote brain tumor research and awareness with the American Brain Tumor Association (ABTA).
5. Raise awareness of the organ donation process and encourage organ donation enrollment.

## TOTAL GIVING TO DATE

- 1 BERKS HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS  
\$130,000 (114 awards)
- 2 SUNFLOWER FAMILY FUND  
\$118,000
- 3 AMERICAN BRAIN TUMOR ASSOC.  
\$31,400
- 4 COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS  
\$19,000



- 5 LOCAL CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS  
\$30,500
- 6 BERKS NONPROFIT DONATIONS  
\$37,000
- 7 BERKS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
\$17,000
- 8 GIFT-OF-LIFE FAMILY HOUSE  
\$27,000

## OUR 2025 GIVING

- ✓ \$ 8,000 BERKS HS SCHOLARSHIPS
- ✓ \$ 2,000 SUNFLOWER FAMILY FUND
- ✓ \$ 2,500 COMMUNITY PROGRAMS
- ✓ \$ 4,735 OPP. HOUSE, JP II CENTER
- ✓ \$ 3,000 GIFT-OF-LIFE FAMILY HOUSE
- ✓ \$ 700 ABTA BRAIN TUMOR RESEARCH

## GIFT-OF-LIFE FAMILY HOUSE

Lauren's Foundation supports the Gift-of-Life Family House in Philadelphia, PA. They provide a "home away from home for transplant patients and families".

Lauren chose to donate her organs and as a result, gave five (5) people the Gift-of-Life. Her heart, lungs, liver and kidneys were used to serve others in need. Visit [www.donors1.org](http://www.donors1.org) to learn more or to register!



Above: Maryann Deans (R) received Lauren's lungs, providing her with 7 more years of life - and the opportunity to meet her future daughter-in-law, Michele (L), pictured with Maryann's son Waylon (center).

# HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS

Our scholarship program began in 2006, initially at Wyomissing and Wilson High schools, and was later expanded to include all Berks County school districts. In 2025, the Foundation received 45 applications, from which 9 students were selected as recipients. The scholarship is available to graduating Berks County high school seniors who have overcome adversity in their lives to successfully complete high school, and who will be continuing their education at an accredited university, college or trade school. Award winners must meet the following criteria:

- Demonstrate a strong commitment to academics throughout their high school career.
- Demonstrate perseverance in overcoming challenging life circumstances to better themselves.
- Exhibit a strong desire for personal growth and success.

An essay based on a quote attributed to the late American author and poet Maya Angelou is required. The quote reads *"I can be changed by what happens to me. I refuse to be reduced by it."* Students can apply annually from December 1st through March 15th at [www.laurensfoundation.org](http://www.laurensfoundation.org).



Our 2025 scholarship recipients, representing Antietam, Daniel Boone, Gov. Mifflin, Reading, Schuylkill Valley & Wilson High Schools

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Lauren's Foundation is proud to support other local organizations, schools, and nonprofits in support of their missions, such as the Opportunity House of Reading, John Paul II Center for Special Learning and IM ABLE Foundation.



Above: A participant finishes her 5K run at Fitzy's Halloween Event at the West Reading Playground/Park in October.



Above, Stacy Perlaki, Tatiana Cardona and Allysa Bushkie, from the Opportunity House of Reading, accept a LF donation last fall.

Each year, on the last Sunday of October, LF hosts a community event, "Fitzy's Run," a Halloween-themed festival featuring a 5K run & 1.5 mile walk that supports our mission and charitable funds. Hundreds of participants turn out to participate in this family-friendly fall and Halloween celebration!

# THE DREXEL CONNECTION



Student and staff representatives from Drexel University's College of Medicine were on hand at



Fitzy's Run with educational and interactive displays highlighting Breast Cancer Awareness month, the Health Outreach Program (HOP) and Cutting Edge Anatomy Club. Lauren's Foundation enjoys a special relationship with Drexel University, where Lauren was an Interior Design major.



Above: Checking out the interactive displays provided by Drexel University's Cutting Edge Anatomy Club at Fitzy's Halloween Event.

*"There is no better exercise for your heart than reaching down and helping to lift someone up."*

Bernard Meltzer

# OUR 2025 SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS

*Transforming Lives, Building Community*



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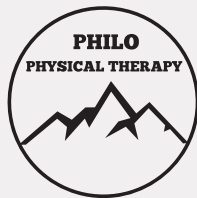
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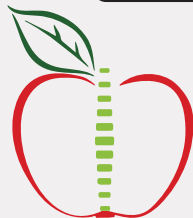
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They care about the Berks community - and their support allows us to fulfill our mission to help those in need. Email us at [sponsors@laurensfoundation.org](mailto:sponsors@laurensfoundation.org) to learn how you can get involved by becoming a sponsor!

*Thank you runners, participants, volunteers, the sisters of Delta Phi Epsilon, Drexel Medical School students & staff, Borough of West Reading and Fleet Feet West Reading for your participation!*

**WWW.LAURENSFOUNDATION.ORG**